

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented) A process of producing a superabsorbent polysaccharide derivative, comprising the sequential steps of:
 - (a) crosslinking at least one polysaccharide containing acidic groups with a crosslinking agent to produce a gel;
 - (b) ensuring that the pH of the polysaccharide is between 3.5 and 5.5;
 - (c) comminuting the acidified polysaccharide gel; and
 - (d) drying the comminuted polysaccharide at elevated temperature.
2. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises carboxymethyl-cellulose, further comprising the step of contacting the crosslinked polysaccharide with an organic solvent which is at least partly miscible with water, between step (b) and step (c).
3. (currently amended) A ~~processing~~ process according to claim 2, in which said organic solvent is a lower alcohol, a water-miscible ketone or a water-miscible ether.
4. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups is a carboxymethyl polysaccharide further

containing carboxyl groups resulting from oxidation of saccharidic hydroxymethyl or hydroxymethylene groups, or phosphonic or sulphonic acid groups.

5. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises a 6-carboxy polysaccharide.

6. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups contains 0.3-3.0 carboxyl groups per monosaccharide unit.

7. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said cross-linking agent is a bis-epoxy compound, and the polysaccharide is acidified before step (a).

8. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said crosslinking step is performed at a temperature of at least 100°C and/or at a concentration of the polysaccharide of between 25 and 75% by weight.

9. (previously presented) A process according to claim 8, in which a plasticizer is used during said crosslinking step.

10. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said drying step (d) is performed using a fluidized bed, at a temperature of between 50 and 130 °C.

11. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said drying step (d) is followed by a heat treatment at a temperature of between 80 and 150 °C.

12. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which an additional surface-crosslinking step is performed after step (c) or after step (d).

13-15. (canceled)

16. (previously presented) A process according to claim 2, in which said organic solvent is methanol or ethanol.

17. (previously presented) A process according to claim 5, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises 6-carboxy starch.

18. (previously presented) A process according to claim 5, in which the polysaccharide containing acidic groups comprises a 6-carboxy polysaccharide mixed with a carboxyalkylated polysaccharide.

19. (previously presented) A process according to claim 1, in which said crosslinking step is performed at a temperature of between 120 and 180°C.

20. (previously presented) A process according to claim 9, in which glycerol is used as a plasticizer.